THE CHURCHES

and

THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS

A MESSAGE TO THE CHURCHES

from a Conference of Church Leaders held in New York City, January 24 and 25, 1938

Received by the Executive Committee of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America and commended to the churches for their careful attention and study.

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A CONFERENCE of church leaders, called by the Department of International Justice and Goodwill of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, met in New York City on January 24th and 25th, 1938, to consider what the churches should be doing about the critical international situation. A preliminary memorandum had been submitted in advance and it became the basis for this Message which the conference adopted to be sent to the churches. It represents the prevailing judgment of the group, although of course it is not to be assumed that every individual subscribes to every detail.

The Message was submitted on January 28th to the Executive Committee of the Federal Council of Churches which voted "To receive the Message and transmit it to the churches, commending it to their careful attention and study."

The Department of International Justice and Goodwill recommends that this Message be studied by local congregations in their adult and young people's groups and missionary societies and by councils of churches and ministerial associations, as a basis for action.

Those who attended some or all of the sessions of the conference which formulated the Message are listed in ***Appendix B.***

What Are the Immediate Issues?

To assume that the choice for America is between collective security and isolation is to over-simplify. Neither course is open to us today, unless the terms are used under restrictive definitions.

Collective security, in any strict sense, is impossible today. The world is not a community in which ninety per cent of the people are organized to defend the common good against a disorderly ten per cent. The community is not organized; there is no agency of discipline such as a police force to act for the common good under community direction. On the contrary, each nation is largely a law unto itself with its own agencies of force which are instruments of its own national policy. The League of Nations, with more general support, might have led the world from this international anarchy into orderly community. Such was its purpose. But that purpose has not been achieved.

Therefore, when we speak today about collective security, we speak about the cooperative action of a group of nations which unite their own resources to resist another nation or group of nations while each retains its own national sovereignty. Therefore, their joint action is not closely analogous to the exercise of police power.

Included among the common interests of the nations with which the United States might be involved in collective action are the principles of democracy and of the sanctity of treaties. These are principles which we support with more than self-interest, for we believe them to be essential to the welfare of the world. But it happens also that the three great powers classified as democracies, the United States, Great Britain and France, control about ten times as much of the land area of the earth as do the three absolutist powers, Germany, Italy and Japan. Consequently, important economic factors enter into the issues which divide these groups. Moreover, the economic and political self-interest of the democratic powers, by unwillingness to make concessions to Germany and Japan while they were still under democratic regimes, is in part responsible for the rise of military autocracy in those nations. The world is not, therefore, an innocent community faced with the problem of disciplining a criminal minority.

If the bloc of democratic powers should attempt to discipline one of the absolutist powers, it would probably encounter the combined military resources of the entire absolutist bloc; because, even if the bonds of mutual interest between them should not be sufficiently strong to bring the other two absolutist powers to the

assistance of their ally, those powers would probably take advantage of the pre-occupation of the democracies with the problem of discipline to achieve their own objectives. In trained man-power and in air force the absolutist bloc has resources in excess of those of the democratic bloc. In naval power the democracies are clearly superior. The added power of Russia would give them preponderant military resources; but there appears to be no certainty that Russia would join the democratic empires in disciplinary action.

Questions and exceptions to these assumptions are obvious, but there is sufficient weight of reason in the assumptions to justify the conclusion that the use of military measures for "collective security" probably would mean war rather than the application of such an overwhelming force that resistance to it would be obviously futile and short-lived.

Economic sanctions are in a somewhat different category, but some of the same questions must be raised about them. Will they be effective unless applied so generally by the nations as to make them overwhelming? What are the chances of economic and military reprisals which would lead to war? These questions must be raised concerning any of the wide variety of economic sanctions which might be used—embargo on loans, embargo on export of war materials, embargo on all exports, boycott of imports.

If collective security is not the issue, how shall we state it? Is it not somewhat as follows: *In the absence of an organized community of nations, what measures can a bloc of powers take cooperatively to establish justice and to maintain peace and order?* This is what some people mean by "collective security," but can we not agree that this is the problem and not call it collective security because of the many other connotations of that term?

Can we not also agree that isolation from the rest of the world and its problems is probably impossible and certainly undesirable? To hold aloof from the troubles of the world is morally reprehensible and ethically indefensible. Furthermore, because of the economic interdependence of nations, war anywhere has its repercussions everywhere, and if we abandoned intercourse with the nations involved in a widespread war our national economy would be seriously disrupted.

Are we not correct in assuming that most of those within the churches who supported the so-called "neutrality" legislation did not and do not advocate a policy of isolation from world affairs? The same may be said, without judging the merits of the measure, of those

who supported the Ludlow Amendment. Many of those who have supported such measures have been among the most energetic and ardent advocates of a policy of cooperation with other nations.

Let us therefore agree that church groups are not divided on the question of cooperation but on the question of what kind of cooperation is desirable. All agree on the necessity of various kinds of non-coercive measures. There are three points at which we divide: First, Shall we announce that it is our intention as a nation not to participate in military action in other parts of the world even for the purpose of restraining an aggressor? Second, What kinds of economic and political sanctions are apt to be effective without the threat of military sanctions? Third, What, if any, types of economic coercion or non-cooperation are ethically more desirable than war, assuming that they will not lead to war? These questions are all aspects of the fundamental issue already stated but applied now to the United States. *Pending the establishing of an organized community of nations, what measures can the United States take, alone or in cooperation with other nations, to establish justice and to maintain peace and order?*

A Program for the Churches

When nations are set against each other in conflict of policy or of violence, the attention of the churches is devoted largely to two concerns—prayer for peace (perhaps for victory) and debate as to whether they should support their respective governments in their programs. While heartily committed to the desirability and necessity of prayer, should we not ask what else the churches can do to remedy the causes and to resolve the conflict?

There doubtless are characteristically Christian tactics of overcoming greed, arrogance, violence and other manifestations of evil which cannot be expressed today in national policy and validated in terms of immediate political results, which the churches should discover and practice. In this hour when the world has been brought close to despair by the bankruptcy and futility of its own secularism, the churches, if they would serve the world, must not be limited in their strategy to the programs of national and international politics.

Therefore when we consider concrete measures we are concerned with (A) certain aspects of national policy upon which church members as citizens are under obligation to express themselves, and also with (B) steps which the churches, as churches, both local and national, should take:

A. Problems of National Policy—

I. Christians should urge upon the government certain policies which they believe to be in the interest of international justice and goodwill. There must be provision for peaceful change in the world. Change will come. If it does not come about by negotiation it will come about by war.

a. The United States should take appropriate initiative, in cooperation with other nations, to ease economic tensions and to provide for a more equitable access to economic advantages which are now held too exclusively by some powers. Our government has played a commendable part in the stabilization of currencies and in the promotion of reciprocal trade agreements. It should extend such agreements. It should even now urge a world economic conference. Concessions could be offered on conditions which would be in the interest of the innocent victims of present aggression and in exchange for such political guarantees as would tend toward re-establishing international order and confidence. We in America would comply with the following recommendation of the Oxford Conference:

> "The unequal distribution of natural bounties is one of the causes of war, if control is used to create a monopoly of national advantages. Christian people should move their governments to abstain from such policies and to provide a reasonable equality of economic opportunity."

We would support the foregoing program of economic adjustment as a substitute for the proposal to relieve international tension by the reallocation of colonies, which involves the disregard of the will of the weak by the strong. We should declare our commitment to the principle of freedom for subject peoples, which involves the immediate drastic modification of the whole colonial system and the ultimate freeing of all colonies. We believe that this principle is not only the recognition of an essential right but also a prerequisite to the creation of that sense of justice and goodwill without which we cannot hope to rid the world of war.

b. The United States should take initiative consonant with its responsibility as a member of the society of nations by joining the World Court and assisting the other nations in re-

organizing the League of Nations or in organizing a new league divorced from the Versailles Treaty and committed to facilitating peaceful change rather than to maintaining the status quo by military sanctions.

c. The United States should indicate its willingness to support and participate in a permanent economics office if and when it should be set up by the League of Nations with a status comparable to that of the International Labor Office.

d. The foregoing measures will be effective only if they are an integral part of a resolute and energetic effort to achieve a more comprehensive and essential solution of international problems. The world community which has become a reality must have its world government. Anything less constitutes the equivalent of efforts to administer the affairs of a city by means of occasional committee meetings of citizens and to maintain order by means of vigilante groups. Unqualified sovereignty by any section of a world society is morally indefensible. Its impracticality is demonstrated by present world anarchy.

We urge a World Commonwealth whose agencies of government can alone provide the comprehensively constructive answer to the baffling problems of international relations. Such a world political order is a natural sequence of oecumenical Christianity.

II. Church people must resolutely resist

a. The increasingly prevalent reliance upon militarism, which is expressed in

1. The armaments race upon which the United States is entering. (See Appendix A for a more comprehensive statement adopted by the Executive Committee of the Federal Council of Churches.)

2. Schemes to set aside democratic policies and procedures and to regiment the nation, such as those suggested in the War Department's Mobilization Plan and in the Sheppard-Hill Bill.

3. Militarizing our youth by military training in schools and colleges.

4. Manifestations of belligerency in response to incidents such as the sinking of the Panay.

b. The continued and accentuated reliance of governments, including our own, in the methods of power politics. (By power politics we mean the use of the threat of force, implied or explicit, to reenforce diplomacy.) Reliance on power politics results partly from the lack of methods of international cooperation to maintain or restore peace. While it is possible for power politics to be used in any particular case without leading to war, and to be used by statesmen sincerely convinced that they are taking the best course available to avoid war, the element of threat means that eventually the methods of power politics will be resisted by the same methods, and war will result. The reliance of our own government upon such methods is indicated by its increased naval building program in categories which we believe are not required for the defense of our own territory and by such collateral activities as its dispatch of vessels to Australia and Singapore and the projection of naval maneuvers in the western Pacific.

c. The psychology of fear and the sinister influence of propaganda based on ill-will, misrepresentation, or falsehood through the press, radio, motion pictures, and public meetings.

B. We recommend that the churches, as churches, branches of the universal Christian fellowship—

I. Affirm at all times, in war and in peace, our supreme loyalty to God as Lord when there is a conflict of loyalties, particularly as between God and the state.

II. Magnify and maintain unbroken a world fellowship of prayer. No church should "pray against" any people under any circumstances.

III. Strengthen the oecumenical organization of the church around the world.

a. By continuing to stand as a witness to the worldwide one-ness of the Christian family in a disintegrating world;

b. By prayerful interest in and concern for the younger churches, now undergoing such crucial testing in Japan, Korea, Manchuria, China and elsewhere;

c. By taking every practical step to hasten the formation of the World Council of Churches as a symbol and instrumentality of unity;

d. By seeking to make known the decisions of the Oxford Conference on the subject of the Christian and War;

e. By developing and utilizing the factual studies of the Research Department of the Federal Council of Churches as it seeks to offset the baneful influence of war propaganda.

IV. Promote the exchange of non-political deputations to maintain Christian fellowship.

V. Support with new vigor and sacrifice the missionary work of the churches, recognizing that our Christian representatives abroad are our most potent agents of international confidence, helpfulness and peace founded on permanent principles.

VI. Perform the ministry of healing and reconciliation among people wounded in body and in spirit as the result of war or other causes.

VII. Maintain our fellowship both with those whose conscience leads them to participate in war and with those whose conscience forbids them to participate in war.

The Challenge to the Churches

At the close of the World War outstanding leaders both within and without the churches charged them with much of the responsibility for the failure to prevent it. Since that time many churches and individuals have renounced war as a method of settling international disputes. Governments have repudiated war as an instrument of national policy in the Kellogg-Briand Pact.

Today the people live in grave apprehension because of the prospects of another war, for they know that war means chaos. They are without hope unless a better way is found and followed. They realize that hopelessness is due to moral and spiritual impotence more than to ignorance as to what should be done. Consequently they look to the churches to save them. The churches' responsibility is also their opportunity. They dare not fail, at least unless they make a much more heroic effort than they have yet made.

Regardless of the action of individuals in their membership, let the churches in their official corporate capacity keep aloof from war. Let them not participate in the war system but remain always an energizing spiritual influence for reconciliation and goodwill.

It is not too late to prevent general war. Even in most of those nations which seem to have gone war-mad, there are thousands who have not bowed and who will not bow the knee to Mars. The Churches of Christ have a saving witness to bear to the world, and if they bear it now in action as well as in resolution, they may save the world from a holocaust.

To accept a counsel of despair when clouds gather and storms break is to deny faith. The Christian's faith in justice and goodwill is as valid and necessary when violence and hate become active as when they are quiescent. When men in the frenzy of fear tend to resort to the pagan ways of the world and its machines of destruction, the churches must proclaim firmly and clearly "The Lord thy God reigneth." They proclaim that fact as a judgment, as a warning and also as the basis of their faith that God's way of dealing with the sins of injustice and war will prevail and that war is not inevitable.

The Churches of Christ must emphasize and rely upon God's way of purging the world of its greatest social evils. Unless they do so, they will both fail the world in its hour of crisis and betray their own deepest convictions and loyalties.

APPENDIX A

"The Executive Committee of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America registers its disapproval of the proposed increase of naval and military expenditures beyond the budget already submitted for the fiscal year 1938-1939, as unwarranted by any evidence thus far presented and calculated in the present world situation to stimulate the spirit of fear and unrest which is the parent of war."

ACTION OF JANUARY 28, 1938

APPENDIX B

Rev. William H. Alderson
Rev. Henry A. Atkinson
Rev. Lester Auman
Mrs. Jesse Bader
Rev. Roswell P. Barnes
Eugene E. Barnett
Mrs. Frederick S. Bennett
Rev. Charles F. Boss, Jr.
Rev. W. Russell Bowie
Rev. Gilbert Bowles
Rev. Edward C. Boynton
Rev. Leland S. Brubaker
Margaret E. Burton
Anna E. Caldwell
Mrs. Jennie C. Callister
Rev. J. Henry Carpenter
Rev. Samuel McCrea Cavert
Rev. Allan Knight Chalmers
Rev. Merrill F. Clarke
Mrs. James S. Cushman
Rev. James W. Decker
Bishop Paul de Schweinitz
R. H. Edwin Espy
Rev. Harold E. Fey
Pres. James H. Franklin
Rev. Lawrence H. French
Katherine Gardner
Linley V. Gordon
Mrs. Clayton J. Harcourt
Harold A. Hatch
Prof. William I. Hull
Charles D. Hurrey
Rev. Paul Hutchinson
Rev. Samuel Guy Inman
Rev. Ray Freeman Jenney
Mrs. Orrin R. Judd
Prof. C. Ray Keim
Mrs. Thomas W. Lamont
Rev. John W. Langdale
Rev. John H. Lathrop
Prof. Kenneth Scott Latourette
Rev. Charles T. Leber
Rev. Henry Smith Leiper
William W. Lockwood, Jr.
Edith E. Lowry
Rev. L. Ward McCreary
Rev. Elmore McKee
Rev. Oscar Maddaus
Rev. Leslie B. Moss
Rev. Vernon Nash
Rev. A. J. Neuenschwander
Rt. Rev. G. Ashton Oldham
Rev. George L. Paine
Rev. Irwin G. Paulsen
Dr. Leland Rex Robinson
Elsie G. Rodgers
Mrs. Emory Ross
Arthur D. Reeve, Jr.
Rev. Randolph C. Sailer
Rev. John Nevin Sayre
Rev. David B. Schneder
Rev. Robert W. Searle
Rev. Luman J. Shafer
Rev. Ralph W. Stoody
Rev. Philip Allen Swartz
Mrs. Augustus Trowbridge
Rt. Rev. Henry St. George Tucker
Florence G. Tyler
Rev. Herbert C. Van Horn
Rev. Walter W. Van Kirk
Rev. Theodore Walser
Rev. A. L. Warnshuis
Prof. William A. Weber
E. Raymond Wilson
Richard R. Wood
Rev. M. R. Zigler

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SUGGESTED READINGS

*THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH AND THE WORLD OF NATIONS, Oxford Conference Study Outline—Section V; Universal Christian Council, 1938, 15c.

*THE CHURCH AT THE HEART OF THE WORLD CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY, by Esther B. Strong. New York, International Missionary Council, 1937, 25c.

*CHURCH AND STATE, by Ryllis Alexander Goslin. New York, Foreign Policy Association, 1937, 25c.

*PEACEFUL CHANGE: THE ALTERNATIVE TO WAR, by Wm. T. Stone and Clark M. Eichelberger. New York, Foreign Policy Association, 1937, 25c.

*WORLD PEACE AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONS, by Harold E. Fey. New York, Friendship Press, 1937, 35c.

*COLONIES, TRADE, AND PROSPERITY, by Maxwell S. Stewart. New York, Public Affairs Pamphlet, No. 13, 1937, 10c.

*PROGRAM SUGGESTIONS FOR WORLD PEACE, Federal Council of Churches, 1934, 10c.

RELIGION RENOUNCES WAR, by Walter W. Van Kirk. Chicago, Willett, Clark & Co., 1934, $2.00.

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*THE FAR EASTERN SITUATION, Messages and Resolutions of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America and the Federal Council of Churches. Federal Council of Churches, 1938, 5c.

*May be ordered from the Department of International Justice and Goodwill.